WRITTEN ANSWER TO STARRED QUESTIONS

Income Ceiling for Coverage under the ESIC

*21. SHRI S.M. KRISHNA: Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether Employees State Insurance Corporation had revised the income ceiling for the coverage under the scheme in January, 1997, if so, the increase in total subscribers and the subscription amount so increased since January, 1997;

(b) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the newsitem captioned "ESIC draws a blank from State Governments" which appeared in the Hindustan Times, dated the 17th October, 1997, if so, the reaction of Government thereto;

(c) what are the details of the proposal for State level subsidiaries of ESIC sent to State Govenments; and

(d) what alternative measures are being taken to take care of growing complaints against State Directorates of ESIC after poor response to setting up State level subsidiaries?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) to (d) The Labour Ministers' Conference of major States in a meeting held on 4.10.96 recommended enhancement of the wage ceiling for coverage under the ESI Scheme from Rs. 3,000/- to Rs. 6,500/- per month. The Conferece also recommended enhancement in the rate of contribution from 4% to 4.75% and from 1.5% to 1.75% of the monthly wage to be recovered from the employers' and the employees respectively. The ESI Corporation which is a tripartite body comprising inter alia experts from medical profession and 10 representatives of Central Trade Union Organisations also considered and recommended the proposals in the meeting of the Corporation held on 5.10.96. The Central Government accepted the recommendation and enhanced the wage ceiling under the ESI Scheme from Rs. 3,000/- to Rs. 6,500/- per month w.e.f. 1.1.97. The rates of contribution were also accordingly enhanced. After enhancement in the wage ceiling about 11.01 lakh additional employees have been brought under coverage of the ESI Scheme upto 31.10.97. As on 30.6.97 the contribution income of the Corporation has increased by about Rs. 227.00 crore as compared to the contribution income during the corresponding period last year.

In order to bring improvement in rendering better quality services under the ESI Scheme one suggestion that has been made is setting up state level subsidiary corporations of the ESIC. This suggestion has been referred to the State Governments/UT Administrations who are administering medical care under the ESI Scheme. Their views/comments are still awaited. Improvement in the ESI medical care is an ongoing process. Recently the ESI Corporation has decided to enhance the ceiling on expenditure on medical care from Rs. 410/- to Rs. 500/- per Insured person per annum w.e.f. 1.4.97. The Corporation has launched an extensive programme for upgradation of hospital facilities by providing latest modern equipments in the ESI Hospitals/dispensaries. For proper diagnosis and cure of occupational diseases, the Corporation has also set up four occupational Diseases Centres i.e., one each at Delhi, Bombay Calcutta and Madras at its cost. In order to ensure that the insured persons do get proper medical care, the Corporation has set up a General purposes Sub-Committee which visits ESI Hospitals and dispensaries in 2 or 3 States each year. The deficiencies pointed out by the Committee are brought to the notice of the concerned State Governments for taking suitable remedial measures. The State Governments have been recently advised to fill up all vacancies of Medical Officers/Specialists and also ensure regular availability of medicines and ambulance services to the Insured persons.

Water Borne Diseases in the Country

*22. SHRI RAJNATH SINGH SURYA: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that nearly two third of diseass in the country is water-borne;

(b) whether Government have got any study done in this regard to further strengthen their various disease control programmes;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND FAMILY WELFARE (SHRIMATI RENUKA CHOWDHURY): (a) to (d) Water borne diseases are a major public health problem in India. According to WHO findings approximately 60% of all the communicable diseases in most of the developing countries including India are water and sanitation related. According to the All India Institute of Medical Sciences although, 80 percent of the country's population has access to clean water, 50 to 60 percent households lack adequate sanitation and this contributes to feco-oral transmission. Several programmes have been launched by the national government to prevent deaths due to diarrhoeal diseases.

The Biotechnology Department is supporting research and development for rota-virus and Cholera vaccines. National Institute of Communicable Diseases has initiated a Disease Surveillance Programme in five pilot districts (Gurgaon in Haryana, Alwar in Rajasthan, Mehsana in Gujarat, Allepy in Kerala and Kolar in Karnataka). The programme inter alia provides establishing of early warning signal mechanism with appropriate laboratory support for detection of outbreaks for timely action.

Several surveys have been carried out at the community level and specifically in the States of Bihar, Jammu & Kashmir, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra and Orissa. The slum areas of major towns have also been surveyed primarily on children who are largely affected.

The Child Survival and Safe Motherhood Programme (now a component of Rural Child Health Programme) aims at reducing mortality due to diarrhoeal diseases among children under the age of five years by 70 percent by the year 2000 AD. Under the programme standard case management of diarrhoea at all health facilities, supply of ORS packets and education of mothers in home management of a child with diarrhoea and early referral are being undertaken.

Agricultural Workers

*23. SHRI GURUDAS DAS GUPTA:
SHRI GAYA SINGH:

Will the Minister of LABOUR be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that a proposal for bringing a Central legislation for the welfare of agricultural workers is pending for a long time; and

(b) if so, the details thereof and by when it is likely to be introduced in Parliament?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF LABOUR (SHRI M.P. VEERENDRA KUMAR): (a) and (b) Proposal for enacting a comprehensive law providing for regulation of employment and conditions of service of agricultural workers and for establishing of a welfare fund for financing various welfare activities has been drawn up. Final decision on the proposal has not yet been taken and the same is under Government's consideration. Efforts are being made to finalise a Bill on the subject and introduce it in the Parliament at the earliest.

India's Position vis-a-vis other poor countries in Asia

*24. SHRI SANJAY DALMIA:
DR. MOHAN BABU:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether India ranks the highest among the poor countries in Asia, as per the study conducted by the Asian Development Bank;

(b) if so, the position of India vis-a-vis other countries; and

(c) whether Government have formulated any ambitious scheme to remove poverty from the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMME IMPLEMENTATION (SHRIMATI RATNAMALA DEHARESHWAR SAVANOOR): (a) to (b) As per Asian Development Bank publication titled "Emerging Asia-Changes and Challenges", poverty rate is highest in South Asia at 43 per